

A Business You Can Start

I WAS in my first year at high school when the idea of making money out of my hobby first came to me.

For a number of years my mother and I had been successful in raising cosmos of size and color that were the wonder and admiration of our town.

When I decided to try to make my knowledge of the culture of this beautiful flower yield me a profit, my friends didn't scoff, but encouraged me in every way.

I started by having a plot 35 x 90 feet spaded and richly fertilized; when I planted seeds of the giant cosmos that I had gathered from my best plants of the previous season.

The weather favored me, and the plants were soon appearing above ground, and grew amazingly.

I used to get up at six o'clock, work at cultivating the young plants until seven, then stop for breakfast and a period of study before going to school.

In the late afternoon

I worked another hour in the garden. When October came my plants were over seven feet tall and blossoming in profusion.

My first sale was made through the mail. Hearing that a family in a near-by town was planning to give a big reception, I mailed them six beautiful white blossoms, with a letter stating that I could supply any quantity they might want, all of the quality of the samples, at the rate of two cents each. They telephoned an order the next day for 500 blossoms, to be delivered in three days' time.

I gathered the plants early in the morning of the day on which they were to be used, packed them carefully, and had them delivered by our grocer, who sent an automobile to town daily.

Four days later I received a check for ten dollars in payment, with a polite note complimenting me on my business ability and the beauty of my blossoms. Before the season was over I had sold ninety-five dollars' worth of flowers. Then I stopped selling flowers and let them go to seed, which I gathered and stored away.

The following spring I put an advertisement in the local paper stating that I had seed of my giant cosmos for sale. I sold fourteen dollars' worth in this way, and had enough left to plant a plot a little larger than my first one, besides which I planted several other varieties of flowers, and set out grape-vines and currant bushes. My brother helped me with this work, and I paid him ten cents an hour and promised him a ten per cent. share of the profits. In four years I had my garden in such shape that it was paying me nearly \$300 a year.

I have now given up this work and am studying nursing in a New York hospital; but I feel

that I could go back to horticulture and with two hundred dollars capital soon have a business the profits of which would amount to a thousand dollars a year.

Autumn is the time to prepare for next year's garden. Don't put off until spring, but begin now by letting your best plants go to seed. Gather the seed carefully, and after they are thoroughly dry put in envelopes marked with the name of the flower and the date when they were gathered.

If you have no choice plants of the varieties you wish to grow, purchase your seeds from a reliable dealer. But, above all things, prepare this fall for your next year's work.



Photograph from George Easton.
Anybody with industry and a little plot of ground can do what this high school girl did—earn a competence at home.

Fish that Fight for Prizes

TO see a fish-fight, one must go to Siam. It is the national sport, and to the Siamese it is as fascinating as is cock-fighting to the Malays. The men of that country will stake on fish-fights not only all the money they have, but even their wives and children.

It is no uncommon thing, in Siam, to see a man slinking along the street with a peculiar bulge distending some part of his clothing. The bulge represents a small glass bowl of water containing a fighting-fish which the owner is anxious to match against somebody else's finny champion.

The reason for the concealment is that fish-fighting is a government gambling monopoly in Siam. Licenses to exhibit fish-fights are sold, bringing a considerable annual revenue to the coffers of the King. The unlicensed fish-fight is like a cock-fight in the United States: the managers and spectators are liable to be arrested and jailed.

Just as cocks are bred for fighting, so are these fishes in Siam, where a special race of game fighting-fish has been developed. They are so tiny that they are commonly kept in tumblers of water, and fed with mosquito wrigglers and other aquatic insects.

Despite their small size, no living creatures are more fiercely pugnacious. It is the males that do the fighting, always in the manner of the duello. The object sought by each of the combatants is to maim and mutilate its adversary. They attack each other in rough-and-tumble fashion, like two roosters, trying, with their strong jaws and sharp teeth, to inflict disabling injuries by biting off fins.

The fins and tails of these fighting-fish are huge relatively to the size of the little

creatures. In the breeding season the males enhance their brilliant markings with a lustrous olive-green hue, overlaid by fleeting prismatic color-flashes, which seem to be controlled by the fish—the tail and fins outlined in brilliant red and yellow.

Fish that Build Nests

BUT there are other points in which the fighting-fish of Siam is remarkable and even extraordinary. For one thing, it is an air-breather—not depending, as do other fishes, upon oxygen liberated by plants. Hence it will thrive, and reproduce its species, under conditions that for other fishes would be impossible. No other kind of fish is so easy to breed in captivity.

These Siamese fighting-fish have been bred for centuries in small glass bowls and other such receptacles, being fed with earth-worms and chopped raw meat when house-flies, mosquito larvae, or other insects were scarce. It is necessary, however, to separate the female from the male, except in the breeding season, because the latter will attack even his mate when offspring are not in prospect.

Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the nest-building habit of this finny species. It makes a veritable fairy nest of air-bubbles, which, extruded from the mouth of the male, are coated with a gelatinous matter that gives them permanency, like soap-bubbles blown from a prepared fluid. The female lays her eggs in the mass of bubbles thus prepared, and her mate guards them until they hatch. Indeed, after they are hatched, he will not allow her to approach the young until they are big enough to take care of themselves.

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